

My People

**Family Stories and Poems
Preserving our French Canadian History**

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By Denise Fontaine-Pincince

April 1, 2018

Dear Family,

Happy National Poetry Month! This will prove to be a poetry-rich month for me beginning with the hanging, on Monday, of a 'Rivers' themed art exhibit at the Palmer Public library where my entry will be an art- with -poetry piece featuring the "At the Picnic" poem.

Why am I sharing this with all of you? Because in 1935, your grandfather Richard Fontaine (or great-grandfather to your children), and his father R.J. Fontaine, had a near-death drowning experience in the Swift River in Bondsville, Massachusetts.

It was a sunny Sunday afternoon, and R.J. and Beatrice (Dulude) Fontaine, took their 4 -year -old son Richard on a picnic with family and friends to a grassy knoll on the Swift River.

Most of the men could swim and they spent the afternoon rope-swinging into the river. R.J., who could not swim, would swing across and land back on land safe and dry. That is, until someone suggested he give his son a ride. The poem tells the rest of the story.

'My People' is a 40-plus poetry collection of narrative poems I've written through the years to preserve our family's French Canadian heritage history. Some poems are Fontaine stories, Some are Dulude. As part of this month-long celebration, I will forward a poem (story) a day in no particular order. Occasionally you will find a companion art piece attached.

Enjoy!

Love you,

Mom

Mémè

Aunt Denise

Denise

At the Picnic
Swift River, 1935

Pa took his turns swinging above the current
landing dry, each time, beside the sycamore.
Not like the swimmers who'd lift off to let drop.

Give the boy a ride, I heard an uncle say.
Pa swooped me up and we were on our way.
The rope held, but his hand slipped. We sank — quick.

Later they'd say no one chanced rescuing us alone,
what with Pa solid as the blocks of ice he delivered.
Arms linked over arms; their human chain grew —

grew till they saved us. Two things I remember:
my mother's cries, and when they set me safe to shore.
Nothing else is clear. I was only four.



April 2, 2018

Dear Family,

Your grandfather, great-grandfather, or great-great grandfather R.J. (Roland Joseph) Fontaine was born on July 23, 1905 in Fontainebleau, (province of Quebec) Canada. He was the eldest son (the eldest child was a girl) of 6 children, and therefore held the most responsibility in helping to support their homestead.

These were poor times. You will come to know just how poor as you read each day's entry, but for now a glimpse at R.J.'s life when he was 9 years old.

Tread Bare

At last inventory I had nineteen pair
not counting the Tecnicas now retired
with tread so bare they aren't trusted anymore
sitting next to the Limmers
with their tire-chained traction and
less than a hundred miles under their soles.

The Sorels are worn mostly for snowshoeing
and the Neos slip over the Sorels
for really cold winter walks
and the ski boots — oh the ski boots
that have danced across summits
in the Rockies, Appalachians and High Sierras.

There are the water shoes,
surf booties,
and flip-flops
to wear in the shower at campgrounds,
three pair of white sneakers, and
the sweet pink sandals worn only once.

Pepe grew up on a farm over the border
second oldest child in a family of six
with one pair of boots to share.
Alone, he went out in the snow.
The others watched from the window
waiting their turn.

Metal Aglets, Cotton Cording, and a Bit of Spit

He doesn't know
as he learns
to tie his shoes that
nearly a century ago
in the town
of Fontainebleau
his great-great-
grandfather
at the age of nine
walked two miles
each way
to make shoelaces
for 5 cents a day.

April 3, 2018

Dear Family,

Here's another story about life on the farm in Fontainebleau.
When I wrote this poem over ten years ago I couldn't help but compare
the abundance in my life (three stanzas) to the scarcity (one stanza) in
R.J.'s early life.

P.S. A six-line stanza is called a sestet

April 4, 2018

Dear Family,

What you may not know is that R.J. loved their little farm in Fontainebleau, and he wanted nothing more than to care for the chickens, cows, gardens and land. But as the eldest son, he was obligated to work at jobs off the farm to earn money for the household. The irony is that his brother Maurice, four years his junior, would have been happy trading places with him. Maurice told me once, in no uncertain terms, how much he disliked all the farm chores and how he envied his big brother who could walk away every day and leave the farm work to his siblings.

R.J.'s love of farm life never subsided. Years after he immigrated to the United States (he never formally became a citizen), married our grandmother, Beatrice Dulude (another story for another day), built a home, a business, and a little nest egg, he asked his wife for permission to purchase black angus to set up a cattle farm. He'd found rental property in Belchertown..a big barn with a fenced in pasture owned by James McLean, and Beatrice agreed.

When R.J. and Beatrice attended a livestock auction to buy his black angus, he sat there quietly for a long time with his auction paddle in hand, hesitant, cow after cow sold before his eyes waiting until Beatrice nudged him and said, "If you're going to buy, you better get going", and the rest is history. His auction paddle didn't stop waving until he'd bought his entire herd.

Today's poem is a fond memory of just me and my grandfather visiting his Belchertown farm.

P.S. Who knew that five decades later, James McLean's granddaughter, Bonny McLean Rathbone, would get together with Bernie Fontaine, R.J.'s grandson!

Black Angus

Excuse me sir
are those black angus
cows out there
in your back pasture
would it be alright
if I touched one

that little one
over by the fence
could I rub my hand
gently over her head
caress her soft fur
smell her sweet breath

simple strokes to carry me
back to that day in his barn
when I poked my head
into the feed bin
taking in a big whiff
and asking if it tasted good.

Stuffing his mouth with grain
he grinned and chewed
chewed and grinned
burst into loud laughter
oats and barley bits stuck
in spaces between those big teeth

want to try some he asked
no thank you I replied
but now I wish I had.

April 5, 2018

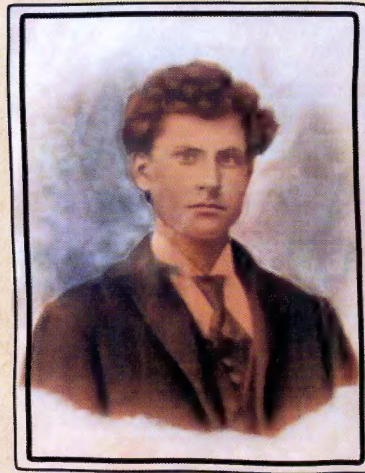
Dear Family,

Thetford Mines is a town in Quebec, Canada founded in 1876 after a large deposit of asbestos was discovered there. In 1918, when R.J. was 13 years old, he went to work in those mines and it was exposure to the asbestos that contributed to serious lung problems leading ultimately to his cruel demise. And, a lifetime of tobacco. That didn't help either.

When R.J. was 14 years old his parents George and Ozilda crossed the border with their six children to visit relatives in Three Rivers. They hoped the employment climate was healthier in America. That was not the case, and after a short stint they returned to life in Fontainebleau and R.J. returned to the mines. But, not before meeting his future life partner and the love of his life, Beatrice Dulude a French speaking girl from Three Rivers.

Two years later, in 1921, the family tried again. R.J. and his older sister Angelina were sent ahead to Three Rivers to look for work. Opportunity still wasn't good, and they were preparing to return to Canada when their parents, who hadn't heard a word from them in weeks, interpreted 'no news as good news' and they sold the farm, packed up their goods and headed, like so many families across the globe at the time, to a better life in America.

Today's poem is my interpretation of those events; most specifically, to their miscommunication.



George Fontaine



Ozilda Lamoureux Fontaine

Two Letters

Fontainebleau, Quebec

August 2, 1921

Cher Angelina,
Dear Angelina,
Ca fait quel que sanaine depuis nous
avons aux des nouvelle des vous.
It has been weeks since we've heard from you.
Toi et ton frere dois avoir trouve d'louvrage!
You and your brother must have found work!
Nous nous preparon de quitter la ferme.
We are preparing to leave the farm.
Demande a ton oncle Louis de nous recontrer a la gare.
Ask Uncle Louis to meet us at the train station.
Nous arrivons a huit heures le soir le neuf de Septembre.
We arrive at 8pm on September 9th.
Ta mere qui t'aime
Love, Mama

Three Rivers, Massachusetts

August 2, 1921

Cher Mama,
Dear Mama,
J'ai tarder aussi longtemp que je put avant
de vous ecrire.
I waited as long as I could to write.
Il ny a pas d'ouvrage ici.
There is no work here.
Notre oncle et tante ont ete tres bon pour nous.
Our uncle and aunt have been so kind.
Roland et moi leurs aide avec la recolte.
Roland and I are helping with their harvest.
Nous retourneront chez nous tous bientot.
We'll return home soon.
Votre fille, Angelina
Love, Angelina

April 6, 2018

Dear Family,

R.J. (Roland Joseph) Fontaine married Beatrice Mae Dulude on February 24, 1925 in Three Rivers, Massachusetts. Beatrice was the middle child and only daughter of Alphonse and Georgiana (Leveille) Dulude. Alphonse was a drayman, which means that he was the driver of a dray, typically a horse drawn flat-bed wagon used to transport all kinds of goods. Georgiana supplemented their income by taking in wash for the neighbors, and in doing laundry at the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary convent which housed the nuns who taught at Saint Ann school the parochial elementary school where Beatrice was educated. (And later, her son Richard my father, and me and my siblings). Both families, Fontaine and Dulude, were parishioners of Saint Ann's church.

At that time, R.J. was a lumberjack working in Stafford Springs, Connecticut. He and Beatrice were living at the lumber camp in December of 1925, and they had every intention of taking the train to Palmer to spend their first married Christmas day with their families, but those plans didn't quite work out.

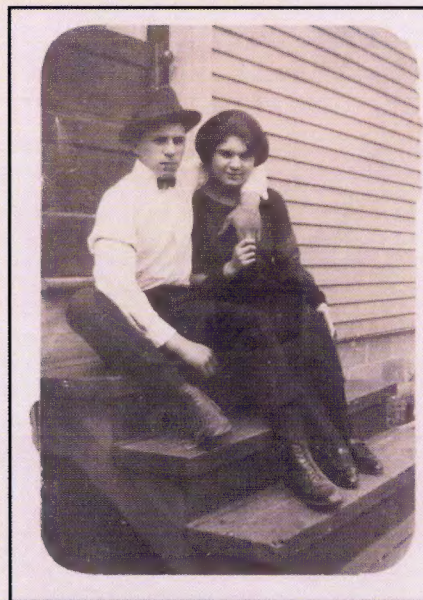
Of all the family stories shared with me by my grandparents, R.J. and Beatrice, and my great-grandmother (Big Mémè) Georgiana Dulude, this story holds the clearest memory. I can still see my grandfather, sitting on his rocker next to the steam radiator in their kitchen, the sadness and the loneliness on his face and in his voice, as he shared the details of that day.

I hope this poem captures the facts, but more importantly the feelings as well.

P.S. With today's entry I'm including two photos of R.J. and Beatrice: one of their wedding day and one right around the time of their marriage, as well as a caboose wall hanging I made to memorialize this story.



Beatrice and R.J. on their wedding day, Feb. 24, 1925



R.J. and Beatrice Fontaine

Stafford Springs Station Christmas Morning, 1925

They waited
for the Vermont Central
to stop,
salivating over thoughts
of turkey, *tourtiere*,
naveau, and *fourd*.
He wished for tree work
closer to home.
She missed her brothers—
how they made her laugh.

They waited,
not believing
what they couldn't hear:
click-click sounds,
whistling steam;
only their breath between
creaks of hard snow
shifting weight
as their bags rotated
from washer-woman
to lumberjack hands.

They waited
until they knew to wait no more.
Walked back
to their *chantier* in the woods,
silent.
Not even the echo of timber
falling to the forest floor.

How We Pray

In 1963, my grandparents unpacked a trunk they had stored for decades in the loft of their garage. Two items from that cache come to mind: a wristwatch my grandmother thought she'd lost, and a print of 'The Angelus,' a mid-nineteenth century oil painting by Jean-Francois Millet. At ten years old I was quite taken by this print depicting two peasants with farm implements in a field at dusk ; the couple bent in prayer over a basket of potatoes, against the backdrop of a steeple on the horizon, the bell's toll marking the end of their work day.

bowing
to the harvest moon
sunflowers



Caboose Wall Hanging made to memorialize this story.

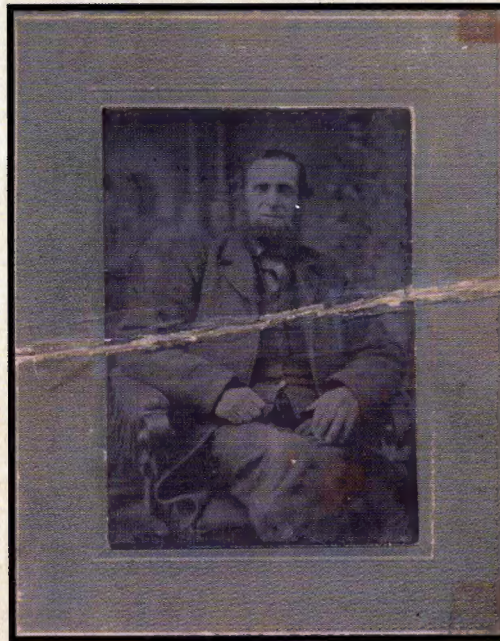
April 7 , 2018

Dear Family,

How fortunate for me, a lover of stories, to grow up living right across the street from three of my elders: pépè, petite mémè, and gross mémè. Seriously. That's how Bernie, Michelle, and I addressed my father's parents, R.J. and Beatrice, and his grandmother on his mother's side, Georgiana Leveille Dulude. Simply translated: petite mémè was 'little mémè' (or the younger of the grandmothers) and gross mémè was 'big mémè' (the older of the two). In time we shortened 'petite' to 'tit mémè' and then ultimately dropped that altogether and she was just 'mémè', and we translated the 'gross' to 'big', and our great-grandmother was referred to, and addressed as 'big mémè'.

Big mémè's bedroom was on the first floor (currently my sister's bedroom), where she kept all the old family photos in her bottom dresser drawer. While my sister Michelle's favorite activity was to play cards with mémè, mine was to look at the old photos with big mémè. How I loved her Leveille and Dulude stories!

But, while she was the keeper of her family's stories, she didn't share all the details of her own personal life with me. Today's poem is a story I was told about Georgianna years after she passed away. It describes one side of her premarital and marital relationship with her husband, Alphonse Dulude, Sr.. Please note that not once, in all her story-telling hours with me, did she ever speak of her husband's drinking, or his bad temper when he was drunk. Not once.



Etienne Dulude, father of Alphonse Dulude, Sr.



Georgianna Leveille Dulude, age 16

Shame On Me

The keeper of stories
told me everything
except how at fifteen
she thought she was clever
riding piggyback
up to his room
so the landlady would hear
only one pair of shoes
on the stairs,

how at sixteen
she was married,
pregnant,
doomed,
how she'd run,
with her children,
from the whip
of his whiskey
to family
who took them in
splaying out her sins
so their daughters
would whiff
the stink of it.

Though she's gone
more than forty years
someone in that family
speaks of it still.



Alphonse Dulude, Sr.



Georgiana and Alphonse Sr. with Alphonse Jr. and Beatrice



Alphonse Dulude, Sr.



Alphonse Jr. and Beatrice



Alphonse Jr., Edward and Beatrice



Alphonse Sr., Drayman



Michael & Mary Lafond at their Arnold Street, Palmer homestead



Billy Mullen and Alphonse Dulude, Sr.



April 8, 2018

Dear Family,

While yesterday's letter zeroed-in on Alphonse Dulude, Sr., today will focus primarily on Georgianna. Let's start with her name.

Georgianna was born on October 1, 1885 in Cauticook, Canada to Joseph and Melvina (Lafond) Leveille. When her parents immigrated to the United States, her father changed their last name to 'Smart'. I learned from Maurice Fontaine, Jr. that 'Leveille' translates to 'a lively person, someone with energy'. Junior said he could see the relationship between the translation and their new Americanized name 'Smart'. As you know, when European immigrants in the early part of the 20th century passed through Ellis Island it was common practice for customs officers to shorten or change the immigrants' last names if they found them too difficult to spell or pronounce, so name changes were not uncommon at that time. (Not that Canadians passed through Ellis Island; they didn't, but the idea to Americanize their names caught on.)

Georgianna referred to herself as Georgianna Smart Dulude, and provided the name 'Smart' when providing Leveille family names to enter into the photo data we recorded together. Here on out I will use the surname Smart for her and her family. I wanted to include the Leveille information for any family member who wished to go deeper into genealogical research.

Growing up in the states, Georgianna's closest relationship was with her maternal grandparents, Michael and Mary (Lamothe) Lafond, and her many stories about them were filled with detail. Please note this couple is one generation older than Etienne Dulude. This means for my grandchildren that Michael & Mary Lafond would be your great, great, great, great, great grandparents. Today's poem and pictures tell more of the story.



Michael Lafond



Michael and Mary Lafond

Keeper of the Stories

My great-grandmother told me everything about everyone: how her grandfather lost one arm and both hands to the saw mill — how he'd button his own vest by pressing against a beam in the barn; how his wife had a goiter the size of a football; how her younger brother sent letters in code from the institution. She gave me the long locks of hair their mother cried over when their father took him for a haircut. She gave me her Aunt Mary's gold hoop earrings, her husband's Franco-American lapel pin, a dress pin the size of a quarter, bearing a photo of her taken at sixteen, and an ivory lace hankie — a gift, when she was five, from the shop owner where her mother bought her a new coat.

She spoke little of herself but for stories of washing clothes for the convent, how she'd hold the clothespins in her mouth, wondering later if that was bad for her health. She told how she scrubbed her floors with lye. She was proud of the starched collars, and spit shine shoes her boys wore to church dances. There were things about her I figured out for myself, and things I learned from my parents like how the whole town called her 'meme,' and how she lived with my grandparents the second half of her life. I asked my Dad what living with his grandmother was like. *Street Angel, House Devil*, he said. He didn't say anything more about that and I didn't ask.

She's gone more than thirty years, yet someone in the family just told how, at fifteen, my great-grandmother was smitten by a man twelve years her senior; how she thought it was clever riding piggyback to his room so the landlady would hear only one pair of shoes on the stairs; how at sixteen, she was married, pregnant and doomed; how she'd run, with her children, from the whip of his whiskey to an aunt who'd take them in.



Georgianna at 9 months old



Relics of Georgianna



Georgianna, Henry and Joseph Smart



Georgianna's parents Joseph and Melvina (Lafond) Smart (middle) with their friends on each side.



(Back row) Alphonse Dulude, Jr.,
(Front L-R) Georgianna Smart Dulude;
Rita Dulude, daughter of Alphonse Dulude, Jr.,
and Georgianna's mother Melvina Lafond Smart

April 9, 2018

Dear Family,

Let's slow things down a bit. I would be remiss if I didn't devote more attention to Michael Lafond, Georgianna's maternal grandfather. As a young child I never tired of hearing about Mike and Mary (my great-great-great grandparents), and big mémè never tired of talking about them.

Here you will find three news articles: two are obituaries from March, 1925 chronicling his major life events, and the other from 1920, celebrates his son Mike Lafond, Jr's impressive gardening skills. The apple didn't fall too far from the tree. Here's to you, Michael Lafond! May your life story live on.

P.S. You will notice the newspaper articles all refer to Lafond as LaFord or LaForde. This is wrong, and a perfect example of how name changes occurred at that time. They listed one of Michael Lafond, Sr.'s surviving daughters as 'Alvinia' Smart. Her name was Melvina, Georgianna's mother.



Michael Lafond Sr.

3225 FINE CITIZEN Death Takes Well-Known Resident at Age of 90. Has Resided Here for 35 yrs LAFORD OVERCAME GREAT HARDSHIPS

Michael Laford, aged 90, who has been a resident of Palmer for the past 36 years, died at his home on Pleasant street, last Sunday morning. With his passing, this town loses a remarkable and heroic figure. Mr. Laford knew adversity in its severest form and met and overcame hardships and obstacles under which many stronger men would have died.

When he was three years of age, his mother died and his father deserted the family, leaving them to starvation or the precarious treatment which the neighbors might



give them. Little Michael was taken by an aunt who kept him for a year. He then went to an uncle, with whom he remained for nine years. He was harshly treated, half starved, and forced to work far beyond his strength all during this time.

At twelve years of age, he had charge seven horses, which he tended night and morning in aid to his other labors. He was the most

out loads of logs through the snow, always ill-clothed and weak from hunger.

Convinced at last that any change must be for the better, he left his uncle's home in 1855, and walked to Clinton, N. Y., where he worked for the Slater company, chopping wood at 35 cents a cord and burning charcoal. Previous to this he had married Miss Mary LaMothe, and out of this salary he soon saved enough to send for his wife and the one child that had been born to them.

He later moved with his family to Stafford, Conn., where he pursued the trade of lumbering and working in the mills. It was here that he met the crowning horror of a life of misfortune.

While working on a big saw, that ripped through the logs at rate of 1164 revolutions a minute, he tripped and fell on the saw, severing his left arm at the wrist. Dazed and blinded by pain, he reeled a second time against the saw, and his right arm was taken away at the shoulder. The man who was assisting Laford became frightened and ran away. Laford shut down the mill and started to walk for assistance.

At this time he had a family of six young children and the outlook for the future was rather dark. Determined, however, that his children should not suffer as he had suffered in his childhood, he again took up the burden of supporting the family. Only five weeks after becoming what most people would call hopelessly crippled, he was again up and around and started at his trade of lumbering. He cleared woodlots and drew lumber from the woods, loading and chaining the lumber to the sled unaided.

Many valuable wood lots were being cleared in Palmer at that time and here Mr. Laford came with his family. He rose before daylight to care for his teams, and left off work only with the coming of darkness. Year after year, he continued this work, and his family grew to manhood and womanhood well fed and well clothed.

One year he planted, hoed, dug, picked up and carried to the cellar without assistance 135 bushels of potatoes. Later in life, he kept a little store where he sold candy, fruit and tobacco. For a time it looked as though blindness was about to be added to his misfortunes, but this time his friends rallied to his assistance and men who had seen his struggle against heavy odds were glad to add to the sum raised.

Mr. LaFord was brought to the Burns Hotel and an operation was performed by Dr. G. A. Moore of this town. The operation was successful and sight was restored. No charge was made for the operation.

In 1912, Mr. and Mrs. Laford celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. He is survived by five children, Mr. Eli Barslow, Mrs. Joseph Smart, Mrs. Benjamin Levine, Michael Laford and George Laford, all of Palmer. The funeral was held Tuesday morning in St. Thomas' church; burial was in St. Anne's cemetery, Three Rivers.

Free of other seven were living and had families of their own.

Mr. Laford is survived by five children, Mrs. Virginia Deshayes of Worcester, Michael Jr. and George of Palmer, Mrs. Georgianna Lavine, Mrs. Alvinia Smart and Mrs. Mary Barslow, also of Palmer. The funeral was held Tuesday morning at St. Thomas' church and burial was at St. Anne's cemetery in Three Rivers.

Michael Laford Dead

Well Known as Man Who Succeeded Under Most Unusual Handicap

Michael Laford, 90 years old, died in his home on Pleasant street Saturday morning after a three years' illness. Mr. Laford was a most unusual man, having raised a large family by unceasing toil, when he had neither of his arms, the most important factors, with which to work.

He was born in Canada, and came to Palmer 36 years ago. It was 56 years ago that Mr. Laford suffered the loss of his two arms, when he was in some way thrown against a big saw which was traveling at a high rate of speed. The left arm was severed at the wrist, and the shock threw him against the saw a second time, severing the right arm at the shoulder. However, Mr. Laford was a very determined man and with his wife and six children the outlook for the future with his two arms gone, was not very bright.

He continued, however, in the lumber work, and cleared wood lots, drew lumber and railroad ties, and all other such work. He dug potatoes with his foot, and with the handle under his left arm, pried with the fork handle across the knee. Mr. Laford was a firm believer in exercise and he had good health until the past three years.

In 1912 more hard luck appeared to this courageous man, as his eyesight failed. A skilled surgeon, however, restored his eyesight and he had one good eye at the age of 76 years, and began the work of peddling. A short time after this he fell on the ice and severely injured his hip, but recovered after a season's illness.

Mr. Laford stated that there were only three kinds of work he could not do, chop wood, milk a cow or mow grass.

On January 24, 1902 Mr. and Mrs. Laford celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. He is survived by five children, Mr. Eli Barslow, Mrs. Joseph Smart, Mrs. Benjamin Levine, Michael Laford and George Laford, all of Palmer. The funeral was held Tuesday morning in St. Thomas' church; burial was in St. Anne's cemetery, Three Rivers.



MIKE LA FORDE AND HIS WONDERFUL POTATO VINE

This is a picture of Mike LaForde and his wonderful potato vine. Growing potatoes is a specialty with Mike. This wonderful vine measured over 6 feet and bore 24 eatable potatoes in the hill. You have Mike's word for it, and Mike's word is O. K. when it comes to potatoes.

Gardens

There are about forty men at the Palmer Works who are busily engaged, although they would object to being called such. Some are a little new at the game, but from a scrap of conversation which was overheard, it is quite evident that the results were quite up to the standard. It went like this:

"You ought to see my 'taters, gosh they're fine! Eight an' ten per hill, an' as big as yer first. How are yours comin' out?"

"Comin' out?" What kinda seed d'you use? I gotta dig, an' a awful hard to get mine out!"

While on the subject of spuds, we wish to introduce our potato king, Mr. LaForde. We also send a challenge to beat his record if you can.

Mr. LaForde is very modest and would not have held up this 6' (24) potato vine, and the twenty-four (24) healthy spuds that came with it, for inspection if his neighboring gardeners had not made a fuss over it. He was just hooking them out a peck to the hill right along, until the above mentioned neighbors began to eat the potatoes. This gave Mike the habit, so he began to count his own spuds, and he admits that this twenty-four (24) potato hill isn't the best he raised.

That is enough, however, to make a Palmerites back him up as the Wickwire Spencer Potato King, and we will gloat over the fact until another work produces a better record with witnesses.

R. D. K.

Michael Lafond Jr. Gardening Article

Michael Lafond Sr. Obituary

April 10, 2018

Dear Family,

Let's talk about my father's mother, Beatrice Dulude Fontaine, middle child and only daughter to Alphonse Sr. and Georgianna Smart Dulude.

Of the 30 years I knew her, here's what I remember: she was kind, caring, patient, quiet, clean (immaculately clean), and always, always, always available.

For all those growing-up-across-the-street-from-her years, there was never a time that she didn't drop everything she was doing to visit with me when I'd stop in to see her. Which, as a child was quite often, and at each visit she would offer me a cup of tea. When I say 'tea is my life', it is because of the comfort and happy memories that preparing and enjoying a cup of tea always brings. In my earliest years, mémère would sit me on her lap (on the small wooden rocker by the steam radiator in their kitchen) and read to me from a very old book of children's stories. Henny Penny, The Wee Wee Woman, and The Old Woman and Her Pig are three stories that come to mind. I loved to read with her, but I also enjoyed sewing. Mémère had an old treadle Singer sewing machine, and a stack of folded calico fabric grain bags (which is the way her chicken feed was packaged). My first sewing lessons were from her, on that treadle machine, piecing together a quilt for my doll. I was 7, and I thought I died and went to heaven. My lifelong love of quilting and reading, I attribute to her.

It is important to note that mémère was equally devoted to her other two grandchildren: Bernie and Michelle. And, there is no doubt they have the same fond memories of our grandmother, but I'm sure we each carry our own unique memories and stories.

In my lifetime, it appeared that Beatrice's only mission in life was to care for her husband, R.J. (and her mother Georgianna who lived with them for years) and to clean and manage the home which R.J. had built for them on the corner of Cross and Pine Streets in Three Rivers. But there was so much more to her life prior to the 50's as mémère had commercially raised chickens for years both egg laying, and meat birds. Talk about fresh poultry! When a customer ordered a chicken for Sunday dinner, mémère went out to her huge coop, hung the bird upside down, slit his throat, and plucked every last feather. Mémère was meticulous, but she wasn't fancy. With the exception of one occasion, she never wore make-up or jewelry. To this day I am still intrigued by the fact that this shy, quiet, immaculate woman raised and cleaned up after one of the dirtiest animals on earth.

P.S. Here are photos of the doll quilt and two related poems. The one about the doll quilt is short and sweet. The one about mémère Beatrice raising chickens reflects my sassy side. Also included are photos taken in the early sixties: one is of big mémère and mémère together in their kitchen; one is of pépère R.J. dressed for a typical work day, and the third is a glimpse of how their house looked to us from our kitchen window across the street.

My grandmother's chickens

were raised on feed
sold in calico bags.

She taught me to sew
a quilt for my doll
with her fabric scraps.

The quilt hung for years
on my bedroom wall.

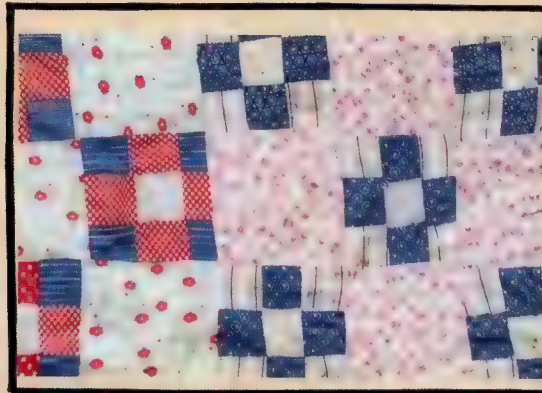
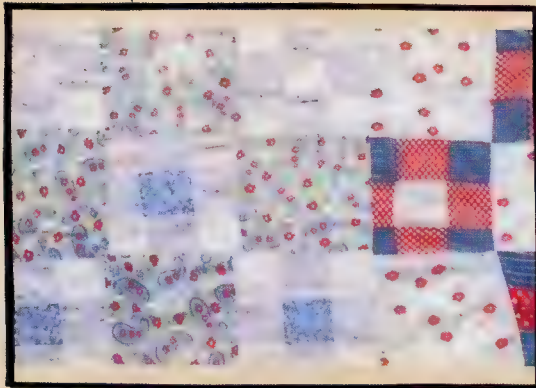
Now it rests in a cradle
with my granddaughter's doll.



Home of R.J. & Beatrice Fontaine, early 1960's



(L-R) Georgianna Dulude, Beatrice Fontaine early 1960's



R.J. Fontaine early 1960's

Egg Money

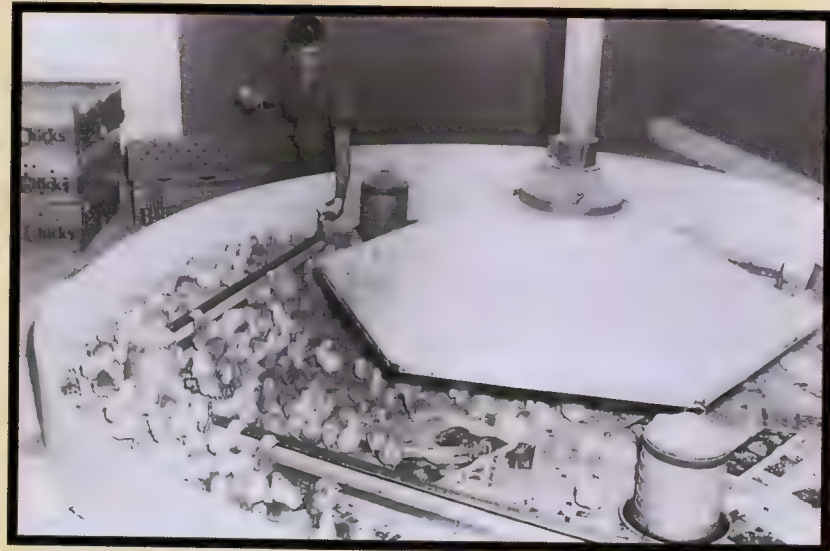
Any day but Sunday
my grandmother
hard to imagine
tied by the toes
cock-will-doodle-do
white and runny
she had her favorites
flick of a wrist
recessed cement pit
red rubber boots
shoveling piles of powdery
shit imagine the killing
wearing white gloves
to high Mass
before I was born.



Beatrice carrying her pet chicken (sometime in the 1940's)



Richard Fontaine, Early 1940's



Richard Fontaine, Early 1940's

April 11, 2018

Dear Family,

There's a lot more to share about Beatrice, but today we're going to side-step a bit.

Mémè's father, Alphonse Dulude Sr. had a sister named Philomene, who married Narcisse Bernard. Philomene and Narcisse had 13 children, and Beatrice was cousin and friend to those siblings. Her closest friend was Rezelda (evolving to an English transcription to Rosella) Bernard and you will find two gorgeous photos of Beatrice and Rosella as young teenagers. Rosella's sister Simone grew up to marry Maurice Fontaine, Sr., R.J.'s younger brother. Two female cousins married two brothers.

As married couples, these 4 were very close, and even when Maurice and Simone moved from Three Rivers to Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1941, their family friendship ties remained tight.

Maurice was the most 'modern' and what I might call 'cultured' of the Fontaine brothers (there were three sisters and three brothers with George Jr being the youngest of the boys), and Maurice chose city life close to Boston to raise his family, and to pursue his career path as an electrician.

Throughout the 1940's, Beatrice shipped fresh eggs in a specially designed crate that went back and forth between houses, to her brother and sister-in-law in Cambridge. This was fairly common practice then and you will see a photo of a metal egg box used for that purpose. My narrative poem, "Mail Order Eggs", illustrates that story.

Here you will find a second poem, with accompanying artwork entitled, "May Morning", which is about Maurice and Simone. Maurice, like all three Fontaine brothers, was industrious and multi-talented. He was a fine woodworker, electrician, and jack of all trades. For example, I was told his wife needed a cookie sheet one day so he formed one out of a sheet of metal. Simone was a quilter, and their son Maurice Jr. showed me a lovely handmade baby quilt she had made for the baby she was expecting before Junior was born. That baby was still-born, so the quilt was never used. May Morning, which is actually two poems/two people/ two stories sandwiched together illustrates two different time periods in their marriage.

The companion May Morning assemblage art piece is made up mainly of relics given to me by Maurice Sr. It was a privilege (and always a lot of laughs) to have known him; a quick-witted, fun-loving man. Simone died in 1958, at the age of 48. Maurice Sr. died in 2001 at 90.

Mail Order Eggs, 1940's

Maurice bought the box that cradled the eggs shipped parcel post every other week. A mail-order black, miraculous metal box with latches that didn't lock & a slot on the top boasting a reversible card:

R.J. Fontaine
(one side said)
5 Cross Street
Three Rivers, Mass

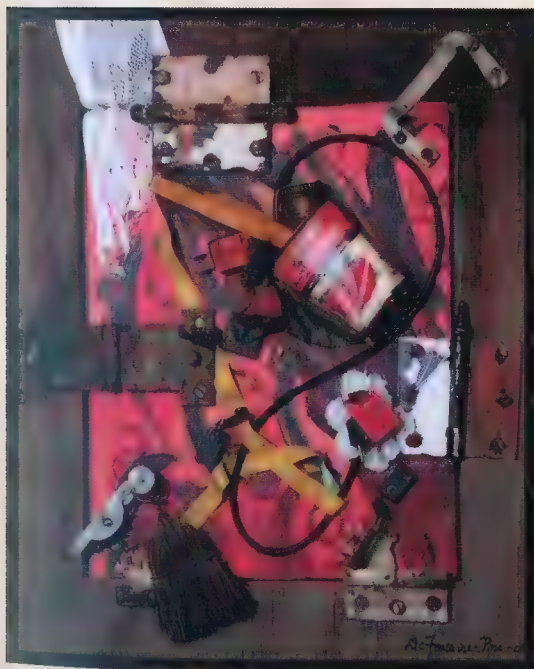
Maurice Fontaine
(the other side said)
22 Day Street
Sommerville, Mass

R.J.'s wife raised the chicks – collected, candled, & shipped the eggs in that black metal box to her sister-in-law who would pile them high in a big heirloom bowl until each morning at five she'd whittle them away as fried breakfast filet and then ship the empty box back for more.

It was the women who fondled those eggs, but the names of their men adorned the card on the box.



(L-R) Rosella Bernard and Beatrice Dulude



May Morning

Fourth month, fresh muslin fabric

The war was good to us.

Fifth month, cut into squares

You rewired half a fleet of submarines

Sixth month, pink & blue scraps

and still managed to make it home

scissors, needles, patterns, thread

for dinner every night

Seventh month, crocus by the door

You could do anything. Remember

pale silk petals, satin-stitched more

that time you formed flat steel scraps

Eight month, border lace edged

into matching cookie sheets, then gave

the blanket ready, across the bed

them away? You always gave things away.

Ninth month, our born girl dead

Sorry I left you so soon



(L-R) Florida Renaud, Rosella Bernard, Beatrice Dulude

April 12, 2018

Dear Family,

Two days ago I wrote that my grandmother, Beatrice Dulude Fontaine wasn't fancy, and with the exception of one occasion, she never wore make-up or jewelry. (Other than her plain gold wedding band.)

That one occasion was R.J. and Beatrice's 40th wedding anniversary party in 1965, and the poem about that celebration pretty much says it all. You will quickly learn, from this poem written in couplets, that R.J. was a character who loved to tease!

P.S. There are two photographs: one is a full length wedding day photo (1925) of R.J. and Beatrice, and the other was taken right around the time of their 40th anniversary.



Beatrice and R.J. Fontaine on their
Wedding Day February 24, 1925

Cat Eyes & Chicken Legs

My grandmother arrived at the Amvets Post 74
with two accessories she'd never worn before:

lipstick and a string of pearls. I liked the pearls
but the lipstick made her look like someone else's

grandmother. My brother gave the anniversary
speech, I delivered roses, our sister Mike sat safe

with our parents. I was eleven wearing sheer
pantyhose for the first time, with shiny black flats

under a straight, short-sleeved red taffeta dress,
gathered right above where there should have been

breasts. My new cat-eye glasses were brown to match
my hair. At the after-party party Pepe knelt by my chair,

lifted my left leg onto his knee, smirked – then spewed
Pattes de poule. When the laughing stopped, I asked mom

for the meaning. *Legs like a chicken*, she whispered.



R.J. and Beatrice Fontaine

April 13, 2018

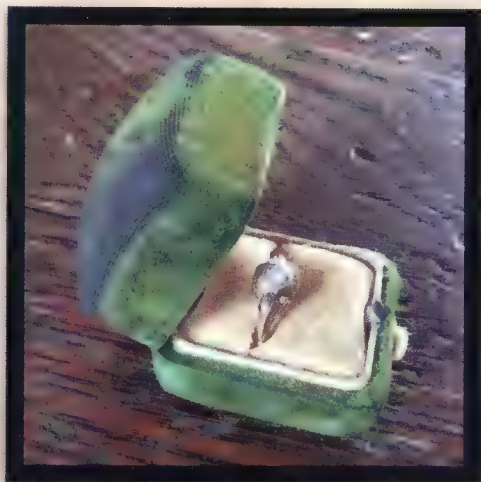
Dear Family,

Like I said, there was nothing fancy about my grandmother. She kept a low profile and nothing about her, or the way she lived was ever showy.

When I visited with her it was usually to talk, over tea, at the kitchen table. One day in the midst of our conversation, when I was maybe 9 or 10, she told me she had a diamond engagement ring. When I asked where it was, she pointed to the kitchen ceiling meaning her bedroom above. When I asked why she didn't wear it, she responded in French.

The poem sheds more light on Beatrice, and tells the rest of this story.

P.S. A three-line stanza is called a tercet. In contemporary poetry, it is not uncommon for the title to serve as the first line in a poem.



She Always Wore a Cotton Dress

with buttons down the front
and kept her teeth in a water
glass in the pantry by the sink.

Her hair was blue for a day
or two after she'd rinse
the dull away; she rolled

her nylons down to her ankles
and that is where they'd stay.
She never wore her diamond ring.

I asked her why one day. *J'ai
toujours les mains dans merde.*
"My hands are always in shit."

It's not what I thought she'd say.
After she died I asked for two
things: the sewing box, and her

diamond ring. *Don't be disappointed,
it's much too small to fit –*
my mother warned — handing

over an exquisite box — velvet,
moss-green, with a mother-of-pearl
push-button clasp, bearing a delicate

ring: a single small stone with gold
basket setting, which I slipped easy
on my finger, as she watched.

April 14, 2018

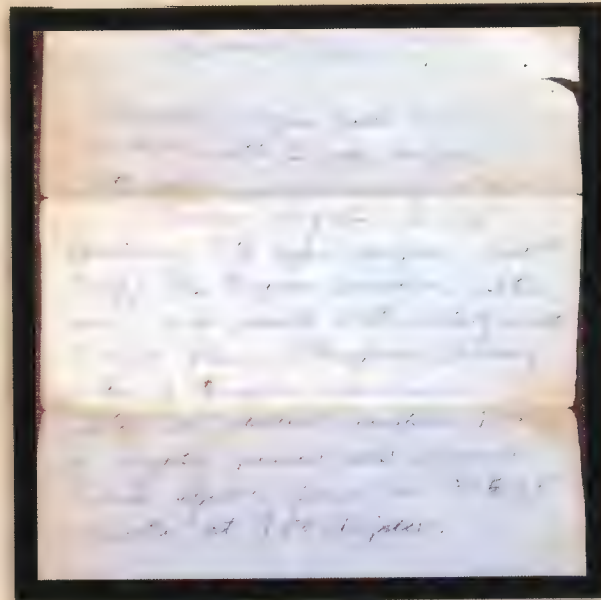
Dear Family,

Have you ever washed your face at the bathroom sink, and looked up to see a facial feature from another family member staring back at you in the mirror? Well, each time I look in the mirror my grandmother Beatrice's eyebrows are right there on my face. And every time I write in cursive, her wrist is holding my hand and pen in place. There are other connections too. Like when I pull a recipe out of my recipe box and wonder if it's her handwriting or mine. This poem says it all.

P.S.

There are two photos of Beatrice's recipe box, and two of her handwritten recipes: one for Rhubarb cake, and one for Date-filled cookies. Both deserts are unforgettable!

the handwriting
in my recipe box
forget-me-nots



Date Cookies

2 cups sifted flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup shortening
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla
5 tablespoons orange juice
1 cup chopped dates
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons orange rind
Sift flour, baking powder, salt.
Cream shortening, add sugar
gradually and continue creaming.
Add eggs and beat until light
and fluffy. Add vanilla and
orange juice. Stir in sifted
ingredients, then add chopped
dates and orange rind. Drop
from teaspoon on foil covered
cookie sheet and bake in pre-
heated 375 degree oven for
about 13 minutes makes about
 $4\frac{1}{2}$ dozen cookies.

I do not use aluminum foil
I grease my cookie sheets

April 15, 2018

It's Hard to Tell

Each evening from the mirror
her eyebrows stare back
at my wet face
no surprise
seeing her wrist wedged
between my arm and hand

hard to tell our strokes apart
certain cursive letters
h's, l's and t's
on crinkled recipes
jammed into a 3 x 5 wood box
with a lid that won't close

kept in the kitchen cupboard
just to the right of the stove
those recipes
written longhand by her
or dictated to me
it's hard to tell

Dear Family,

On the next page you will find two George & Ozilda Fontaine family photos. One, taken in Fontainebleau, QC in 1910 or 1911, includes their first four children: Angelina, R.J. (Roland Joseph), Lillian, and Blanche.

The second photo was taken in 1930 in Three Rivers, Mass. This photo is of particular interest to me because my grandmother, Beatrice (center back row) is pregnant for my father, Richard, and all six of George and Ozilda's children are present along with their son-in-law, Armand Beriault, and their daughter-in-law, my grandmother Beatrice Dulude Fontaine.

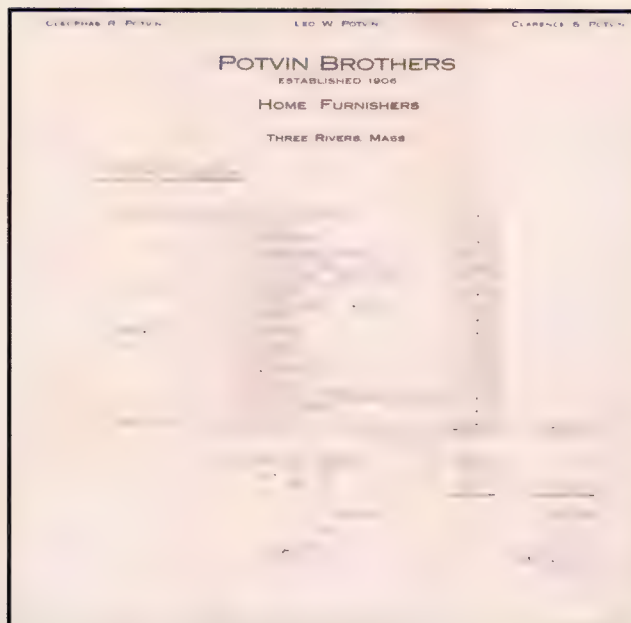
In 1930, R.J. and Beatrice had been married for 5 years, had miscarried at least once, and this pregnancy had complications. In her last trimester, Beatrice was advised to have complete bed rest for the remainder of the pregnancy. As the story goes, R.J. did his part in assuring a full term pregnancy. Each morning before work he would carry Beatrice down the stairs of their second floor apartment on the corner of Pine & Charles, and proceeded to carry her across the street to her Aunt Philomene (Dulude) Bernard's house, where she would rest until evening when R.J. would carry her back home.

Today's poem honors my grandfather R.J.'s dedication and love. You will note that I refer to his strong arms as lumberjack arms even though, by 1930, he was in the ice business. This is called 'poetic license', or 'poetic liberty' as I believe his body strength was built through both occupations and lumberjack arms sound so much warmer than ice man arms!

Also included you will find a 1929 receipt made out to pépé for home furnishings purchased at Potvin Brothers (Home Furnishers), located on Main Street in Three Rivers. This was approximately one year after he started his ice business, R.J. Fontaine Ice. I can only assume that things were looking up. (Notice the cost of goods, and notice the misspelling of his last name. Why, oh why, do people always want to add a 'u' to our name?)



George & Ozilda Fontaine with children Angelina, R.J. (Roland Joseph), Lillian, and Blanche



Potvin Brothers Home Furnishers Invoice 1929



(Back L-R) Maurice Sr. (b.1911), George Jr. (b.1915), Beatrice Dulude Fontaine (b.1905), R.J. Fontaine (b.1905), Armand Beriault (b.?), George Joseph Fontaine (b.1880).
(Front L-R) Blanche (b.1910), Lillian (b.1907), Myrella Beriault, daughter of Angelina & Armand Beriault (b. 1923), Angelina Fontaine Beriault (b.1903), and Ozilda Lamoureux Fontaine (b.1885).

Journeys

Each morning down those stairs
R.J. carried his Beatrice May
left safely in her aunt's care
to pass the day away.

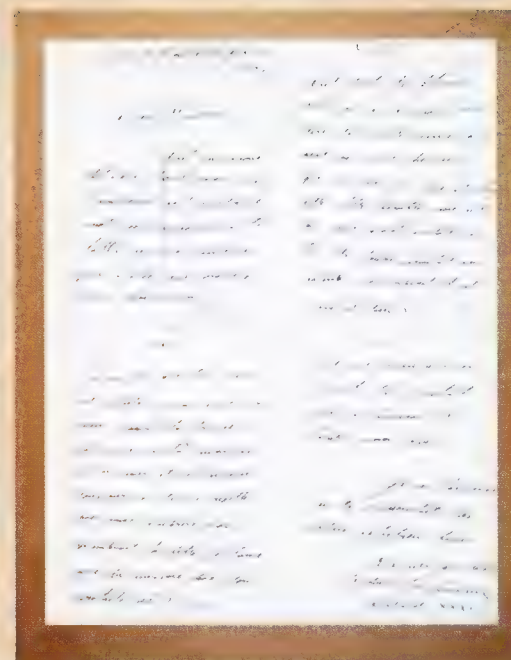
A live matrushka nesting doll
this baby inside its mom
cradled in his lumberjack arms
this time he'd outsmart the odds.

Just like the emperor penguin
holding his mate's egg for weeks
warm behind belly feather fringe
atop his big flat feet.

This dad too, bore some of the load
after work he'd carry her home
each day until that first cry - a son
born Saint Valentine's Day, 1931.



Richard E. Fontaine, age 2-3 years old



R.J.'s 1923 original french love letter

West Hartland, CT
February 11, 1923

Dear Beatrice,

It is a pleasure for me to write these few words in response to your letter that I received with happiness and joy. It is the only pleasure that is here for me. Reading and re-reading your loveable letters, my dear, makes me happy, but it isn't the same as when I'm with you. That time goes by quickly. Presently, time is long and sad.

You tell me that your heart is attached to my heart. It is the same for me since the first time I met you. I loved you then and I will love you forever. If you don't reject me, and I hope not, now you are my girl.

I would like you to send me a photo of yourself. If I had your picture I would not find the time so long and lonely. I close in sending you loving kisses.

From the one who desires to make you happy.

Roland xxxxxx

R.J.'s 1923 love letter, translated to English

April 16, 2018

Dear Family,

When you grow up living in a house directly across the street from your grandparent's, and you spend every major holiday with them, and you cross that street to visit with them on a regular basis, and you observe their comings and goings just as they observe yours you get to know them very well. In fact, some might say, too well. For me, as the granddaughter, I wouldn't classify the intimacy as 'too well', but for my mother the daughter-in-law, I know there were times she felt that way. But that's another story for another day.

For now, let me just say this: R.J. and Beatrice (Dulude) Fontaine were married for 56 years before pépè died in 1981. In all the years that I observed their relationship I witnessed only patience, kindness, respect, consideration, and love in the way they spoke to each other and in the way they treated one another. How many couples can we say that about?

That said, I remember a particular visit with mémè, talking over tea, when she expressed disappointment in a decision R.J. made to take her kitchen-remodeling-nest-egg-money to rescue the family moving company at a low time in the business. Her tone, in telling me the story was one of hurt and sadness, but I never sensed any anger. Today's poem, "Black Tea" captures that telling.

On the prior page, there are copies of a 1923 love letter pépè sent to mémè from West Hartford, Connecticut where he was working in a lumber camp. This was two years before they were married.

Black Tea

Not that it changed how I felt
about him or her or them,
her telling me one afternoon
over Red Rose black pekoe tea
in bone china cups
big enough for two hands

how she once dreamed
of remodeling her kitchen—
pointing to the Glendale gas
stove, just lit with a match,
the faded floor and yellowed pantry
(not even noting the old linoleum walls)

how she'd saved months, years
a thick stash of cash
wrapped in brown paper
hidden in the mothballs
at the bottom
of a zippered garment bag

hung to the far side of the closet
upstairs at the end of the hall
and how my grandfather had walked
right in one day, asked for the kitchen
money, needed it for the business,
just like that.

April 17, 2018

Dear Family,

Beatrice Bernard from St. Hyacinthe (Quebec), Canada was cousin to Simone, Rosella, and their Bernard siblings living in Three Rivers, Massachusetts. Twice a year when Beatrice Bernard would take a train with her family to visit her U.S. cousins, that is how, when, and where she met my grandmother Beatrice Dulude. Mémè was also first cousins and close friends to the Bernard children, but they were related on their Dulude mothers' side.

Beatrice Bernard and Beatrice Dulude became friends, and then became pen pals. For over sixty years they wrote to each other sharing news of everyday life and special events. They told of marriages, births, jobs, deaths, their children, their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren. And then they shared the loss of their husbands who happened to die one week apart.

How do I know all of this? Because my dad, Richard, found all of Beatrice Bernard LeMay's letters in my grandmother's house after she died, and he read them all. Each one was written in French and the chain of those letters pieced the story of their separate lives together.

Today's haiku poem, displayed as haiga (art and haiku), celebrates that lifelong friendship.



sixty years
crossing the border
our letters

April 18, 2018

Dear Family,

In February of 1950, just six months before he married my mother Irene Rachel Charette, my father Richard arranged an elaborate celebration for his parents' 25th wedding anniversary. The event was held at the St. Stanislaus Polish Club (circa 1920) on Main Street in Three Rivers. The reception hall was located on the second floor of the old, wood-framed building.

All of R.J. and Beatrice's family and friends were there: Fontaines, Duludes, Bernards, Fortunes, Ouimettes, Laviolettes, Sansoucys, Bonnayers and half the parishioners of St. Ann's church.

As was typical of French parties at the time, there was food, booze, music and dance. 'Quadrille' dancing to be exact. What is a quadrille? Think Irish step dance, folk dance, and square dance all rolled into one, and dozens of happy French men and women stomping in unison on an old second-story wood floor. Now, imagine a stranger enjoying a beer at the bar on the first floor and looking up cautiously, now and then cutting his Saturday night drinking short to go home to the wife.

The poem is a true account of what took place at St. Stan's Club the morning after R.J. and Beatrice's 25th anniversary party.

P.S. If you'd like a peek at an abbreviated, moderated, docile example of a Canadian French quadrille, go to www.youtube.com/LaBastringue by Annie Walsh. (Not to be confused by the refined, formal, ballroom quadrilles of early France, or the Jamaican quadrilles.)

No French Parties Allowed! 1950

The next morning, following 7 o'clock Mass Walter Waskewicz called an emergency meeting. Longtime board member Frank Vas, whose son married a girl from the French church, struggled with his soft spot — Give them one more chance, he begged. No more chances, Walt argued. We've warned them about dancing quadrilles. You weren't here last night; it's a miracle the goddamn floor didn't collapse.

Later, after a breakfast of boiled red potatoes, roasted shoulder, sauerkraut and rye bread, the president of St. Stanislaus Polish Club, nailed the title of this poem to the door.

April 19, 2018

Dear Family,

In our growing-up-years, our family joined all of the Duludes in celebrating Christmas Eve. Each year a different family would host the festivities, and I best remember a Christmas Eve when the gathering was at our house on Pine Street, Three Rivers.

There are many memorable moments to those special times, but what stands out is the memory of my grandfather, R.J. arriving on the scene each year dressed as Santa. In our youngest years, Santa, his suit, his visit were all so believable and then as we got older well, a picture speaks a thousand words, and the attached photographs tell all.

Playing Santa in the 50's wasn't new to R.J. As the story goes, he purchased the suit in the 1930's and would wear it each Christmas Eve walking house to house visiting family and friends in town. According to legend, he would stop in long enough for a shot of 'cheer', and would eat a pickle or two at each visit. He claimed, 'Eat pickles when you drink and you won't get sick'. Well, each year he had pickles with his shots and each year he got sick!



R. J. Fontaine's 1930's santa suit



Pickles, 1930's

Stars to light the way
he'd walk a stage of streets
through his neighborhood village
where three rivers meet
one hand carried a sack
white muslin tied loose in a knot
in the other a long-handled bell
rung loud as he'd yell *HO HO HO*
Merry Christmas

His theatrics were many and
never rehearsed
but in tonight's yearly role
an encore would unfold. In a suit
of red flannel not wool
with a pillow stuffed fat
and an appetite for laughs
he'd knock on doors

This gift was for grown ups
children ignored
shot glasses came out of the cupboard
set on a sideboard with a bottle of gin and
the August harvest in hand-me-down jars
When you take a drink be sure to eat pickles
so you won't get sick, he'd preach
all the while squelching a smile
then two sticky fingers would swim
through sweet or speckled dill juice
until a pickle plucked out
popped quick in his mouth
and they'd laugh a big belly full

His suit is long retired
faded purple pretending red
unidentifiable
a thread of a thing
when I hold the fabric up
close to my nose
I smell traces a time of less
when Christmas was more

April 20, 2018

Dear Family,

Christmas Eve, 1965, changed the course of our family life, and brought an end to an era of certain traditions as we knew them.

After the Dulude festivities that night, I waited up to attend midnight mass with my dad. At some point during the mass we heard a commotion in the back of the church, and turned to see a few of his Dulude cousins huddled near the door. My father told me to wait in the pew, and he went to ask if everything was alright. When he came back to our bench, he said his uncle Alphonse Dulude, Jr. "Menomme" (pronounced 'minom', slang/and abbreviated from the French 'me homme', meaning my man...his early childhood nickname that stuck for life), had suffered a heart attack and was rushed to the hospital. Walking home from St. Ann's, we turned the corner of Charles and Pine streets to see the dark silhouette of my grandfather, R.J., alone at the end of his sidewalk. When we approached him my father asked, 'How's mon oncle?', to which pépé responded, 'He's dead'.

The rest of that Christmas is a blur, but one thing remains clear: when I heard those words, and I looked toward their house I knew that mémè and big mémè were suffering the cruel, sudden loss of a dear brother and son. For these two women, Beatrice and Georgianna, life would never be the same.

Christmas, and all the major holidays, can be bittersweet; their memories a trigger for a myriad of emotion. When those we love are gone, we can find ourselves unexpectedly moved to laughter and /or tears by a sight, sound, taste, smell, or thought attached to that loved one. As in the case of my grandparents, R.J. and Beatrice Fontaine that trigger for me is the Christmas tree. From the moment I visit the tree farm...to the cutting, transport, and decorating of our tree, my grandparents are with me.

P.S. Here you will find 4 photos of Alphonse Dulude, Jr.: two on his wedding day with his beautiful bride, M. Eva Fortier, one with his two brothers-in law: Arthur Fortier, and R.J. Fontaine, and one by his truck with an unidentified gentleman.

Today's poem, written in traditional verse, is dedicated to my grandparents, R.J. and Beatrice.



My Grandparents Live In My Christmas Tree

As the snow and sawdust fly
And the tree topples aground
Their toes start to wiggle
A certain breeze circles round

The tree is home now all aglow
As the angel rests above
They are stretching now and smiling.
I'm enveloped in their love

Each ornament reflects our family
Old stories newly told
A season full of memories
Each worth their weight in gold

It's time to box up the trimmings
Sweep the needles up off the floor
My grandparents linger a moment
A pause and a sigh at the door

Time to say our goodbyes now
I'll see you both next year
In the attic with the ornaments
Where I hold you both so dear



(L-R) Alphonse Dulude, Jr., Arthur Fortier,
Roland (R.J.) Fontaine



Alphonse Dulude, Jr. and M. Eva Fortier Dulude
on their wedding day.



Alphonse Dulude Jr. on right

April 21, 2018

Dear Family,

There was good news and bad news to living across the street from my grandparents, and I mentioned earlier that for my mother, the daughter-in-law, there were some challenging times. Not only were we all family, but father and son (pépè and my dad), owned and operated 'Fontaine Moving and Storage' (reps for North American Van Lines) with operations office, warehouse, and garages right next door to our homes.

Just as our family of five didn't miss much with the personal, social, and business 'doings' across the street, so too did R.J. and Beatrice sit front row observing our family life. And, what (pépè couldn't decipher through observation, he would ask in a most direct, yet pseudo- casual way. In broken English he would preface an uncomfortable question with, It's none of my business there me, but...

Today's art and two poems provide another glance at our 50's and 60's fishbowl family life.

Never a Knock, He'd Enter Slow

She didn't say but by the way
she focused on her food
the way she didn't greet him
my mother thought it rude —
an intrusion— family business
that could wait.

I always saw through it—
this passport in disguise.
Trucks broke down; it's true
goods were damaged now and then
and movers were a special lot
same book different chapter
day after day after day.

A captive audience we were
his whole world around
a chrome-legged table:
his only child, my dad,
and my mother, the daughter
he never had, and my brother,
my sister, me.

The conversation is long gone
only the memory of his eyes remain
lapping us up— salve for the soul
its camphor lingers still.



There Me

There Me

What do you call a beef and potatoes man
with a sun-baked face and brown leather

hands; with one good suit in the closet,
a rosary by the bed, grapes on the arbor,

and chickens in the shed; with a worn out
nail pouch filled with two kinds of nails:

already-straightened, and still bent;
with a workhorse of a patched, side-step

pick-up with a junk-yard tailgate
and a refurbished latch; with a shiny old

Oldsmobile parked in a two-car garage,
driven only on Sundays, so damn slow;

who after dinner, and repairing trucks all
day drives to his hobby three miles away,

to feed thirty Black Angus cows; who
thinks it's alright to ask what you and your

date did behind closed drapes, as long as he
begins *It's none of my business there me, but...*

April 22, 2018

Dear Family,

Mémè did her fair share as well in the butting-into-our-personal-family-business, but it wasn't very often and she was way more subtle about it than pépè. Not surprising, with women being the smarter of the sexes and all. (Just wanted to see if the men are paying attention!)

Today's art and poetry says it all. It wasn't long after this event that I understood and accepted that my grandmother just couldn't help herself. I know a little something about that condition...



Two Apples

That week in the summer of '69 while my mother lost her ovaries I was in charge of the laundry.

As the first load hung out to dry my grandmother arrived from her kitchen across the street and like a bloodhound bolted straight for the clothesline.

Her sharp eyes and chapped hands inspected each wet piece while I stood silent in the doorway.

She unclipped my mother's yellow nightie draping its soft sleeveless satin over one arm and headed for her scrub board in the basement.

A week later she told my mom she regretted what she'd done. Today, sharing this story with my sister, our eyes lock—we recognize who we are.

April 23, 2018

Dear Family,

Let's set the stage. It's a sunny summer day in 1959, school is out for the summer and it's the busiest time in the moving business. My grandfather R.J. is working in the 'yard' today (a.k.a. the warehouse or one of the tall garages), repairing one of the moving vans. It is high noon and he's lost track of time. Beatrice is waiting in their kitchen; his lunch on the table. Five minutes after twelve and she steps outside to give him a shout.

Now here's the part where you come in. One of today's poems is entitled 'The Lunch Bell'. That 'bell' is actually a piercing human voice summoning R.J. to the table. I'd like you to hear the sound of that call, so begin by stepping out onto your back step. (If you are male, try to employ the help of a female for this part.) Now, in your most dramatic voice you're going to call for 'Roland'. But, there's a twist. Instead of yelling RO-LAND, the call will sound something like this... 'rrrow- LOUUUUUUUU. The 'r' is rolled; that first syllable unstressed and quickly dismissed, whereas the second syllable, the 'LOUUUUUUUU' is shrill, loud, and elongated in your highest soprano voice. Try it. It's a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

This poem references a couple of details some of you may know nothing about. The 50's was a special time and personal service went way beyond anything you might imagine. For example, we had a milk man (who delivered milk, cream, and eggs), a juice man (who delivered orange juice in glass jugs), a baker (who carried bread, donuts, and a few packaged baked goods), and a dry cleaner who picked up and dropped off our dry cleaning. To top it all off, our family doctor, Dr. Anton, made house calls. But the most interesting home service at that time was the garbage man. No, not trash or rubbish removal. I'm talking pure garbage, as in compost, as in food scraps. There were no garbage disposals, so folks would put their compost into a pail that slid into an underground metal cylinder with a visible hinged metal lid. The garbage man would arrive in his truck to empty the garbage pails wearing knee-high black rubber boots, and black rubber gloves. To this day, I am in awe.

One last bit of clarification: as Catholics we were not allowed to eat meat on Fridays.

OK. You're ready to roll.

The second poem, 'With a Kiss', is also food related. A sweet memory. (Excuse the pun.)

The Lunch Bell

From their back stoop she'd call —
a shrill sort-of-bell hunting for his hungry
ears. He'd know, we'd all know —
Put down the wrench, the oil can,
or the tire you're changing.
Wash with sand-soap from a fat
tin by the driver's room sink.
Squint into sunshine.

Round the seasoned arbor
with its memories: juice, jam,
and a yellowed crock bowl
overflowing with seeded purple grapes.

Nod past bluebells waiting to pop.
Pass a heavy metal lid sealing-in
compost stench from the below-ground
maggoty bin emptied every Thursday
by a man in big black rubber boots
into a truck already swarming with swill.

Open the back door into more
than a steaming plate of beef and browned
potatoes soon to be smothered under
McCormick's powdery black pepper.

Unless it was Friday and the Pope
himself would be seated at the table
to pay witness to a simpler sustenance —
a bowl of mitton: double slice of milk-
doused, sugar-coated bread, or
for a change — a stack of hot gallets:
pan-fried dough smothered in a pool
of grade A fancy maple syrup.

There'd be no meat eaten today —

With a Kiss, 1961

It was a corner piece
goldish brown and even at eight
I knew a prime piece of real estate
when I saw one.

Two clean cut edges
two curled up crusty sides
chewy sweetness tucked inside
in an otherwise empty pan.

My face flushed when
she turned me down —
*It isn't mine to give, she said
you'll have to ask your Pep.*

The door opened, my question out
he eyed his scrumptious prize
then asked me what I'd give him
a shrug was my reply.

He pointed to his face
bent close to offer a cheek
I bought that butterscotch brownie
with a kiss to him from me.

April 24, 2018

Dear Family,

Let's rewind the tape and travel back to 1927 when R.J., who was still working in the lumber industry, seized an opportunity for a change in career when a local iceman made a hasty decision to sell his customer list and all of his equipment after his horses fell through the ice.

This misfortune spelled opportunity for my grandfather and the attached poem, written as realistic fiction, chronicles the timeline of events leading to his new enterprise. Whether or not any of these details were published in the local newspaper I do not know, but they certainly could have been as the Palmer Journal Register has been published since 1852.

The telling of this story through a newspaper platform may be fabricated, but the facts are true.

The Palmer Journal

Front Page, February 1927

Last Wednesday, local iceman Thaddeus Giza lost his two draft horses when they fell through the ice on Brown's pond. Giza stated there was no logical explanation for the drownings. "The ice was good and thick — good and thick. All day long my team dragged the scorer back and forth across the pond as I followed, ten feet behind. It could have been me, laid to rest, in that cold black muck," Giza said.

Classified Ad, March 1927

Ice tools for sale: tongs, pike poles, creepers, breaking bar, axes, feeder pike, saws, large and small shavers. For prices call Thaddeus Giza #471

Display Ad, December 1927

As of January 2, 1928 R. J. Fontaine will serve the ice customers of T. Giza. For new deliveries telephone R.J.# 683

April 25, 2018

Dear Family,

By the time my father Richard was 13 years old he maintained a rigorous schedule. He helped his father R.J. with the ice business, helped his mother Beatrice with the chickens, attended school, and for fun and socialization he cared for and rode his horse 'Star'. (He broke his leg once when the girth loosened causing his saddle to slip while doing some crazy stunt maneuvers at a high rate of speed.)

This 1944 photo of pépè and my dad is the only family photo from the 'R.J. Fontaine Ice' era. In the final weeks before he died my father spoke often of those years delivering ice and working alongside his father - expressing regret about the scarcity of photos, and in particular lamenting the fact that he had no pictures of their ice house where the ice blocks were stacked and stored. Dad's desire for specificity in his storytelling became so intent that we tried to find similar pictures of icehouses online, and when we were unsuccessful I employed the help of my artist friend Susan Pecora to create a sketch (per Dad's instructions) of the inside of their icehouse. It was evident to both Susan and I that he was frustrated and disappointed in the results; to him the sketch was insufficient evidence of the ice house's internal operation and try as we might to get it right for him, we literally ran out of time to finish the job.

There were many steps to operating an ice business: from shoveling the frozen pond, to scoring and then harvesting the ice, to the conveyer belt transport of huge blocks from the pond to the wooden building, to stacking the blocks (mortaring them with hay so they wouldn't melt together), and the process of reconfiguring the conveyer belt to load the blocks from the icehouse and on to the ice truck, and then of course, the home and business ice deliveries.

"Duplex Delivery", one of the two poems, is written in my father's voice about one of his favorite delivery stops, on Palmer road in Three Rivers, where a young girl with flaxen hair (he always used that word 'flaxen' to describe her hair), would run out to greet him; how he would chip off a slice of ice for her, swoop her up under his left arm, and carry her (with the ice carried with tongs in his right) up to her house. Her mother would often leave him a home baked treat atop their icebox, and if you had ever heard my father describing these deserts, your mouth would be watering right now too.

The second poem, "R.J. Fontaine Ice", provides a timeline for the ice business and illustrates the quirky, delightful, through-the-backdoor way my father so often answered our questions.

Duplex Delivery

Mother lived on the left,
daughter on the right.

Daughter's daughter
greeted the truck with

her hand outstretched.
I'd fill it with a slice

of ice, swoop up 50 lbs
of giggles with my left hand,

and 40 lbs of ice held tight
between tongs, with my right.

Daughter's family didn't eat
sweets so she'd leave me

baked good treats on top
of the icebox. Cookies,

muffins, brownies and puffs—
unforgettable, oozing, cream

stuffed puffs— every last bite
eaten behind the wheel

of the cab, bringing nothing
home but the crumbs.



Richard and R.J. Fontaine, delivering ice, 1944

R.J. Fontaine Ice

When I asked
what year did pepe start the ice business
my dad folded his arms
stared at the corner of the kitchen ceiling
pressed his tongue
behind his upper dentures
the way he always does
when working figures in his head
and said *let's see*
in 1945 the old lady from Cheneyville
gave me a bag of pears
and when I brought them home
my father said "Son of a bitch...
I've delivered ice to that woman for 17 years
and not once did she give me any pears!"

April 26, 2018

Dear Family,

Did you happen to notice the exceptionally thick block of ice in the back of the ice truck in yesterday's photo? Well, what you may not know is that the thickness of ice is the result of freezing temperatures as well as human effort. Throughout the winter, icemen needed to remove most of the snow from their ponds in order for the ice to thicken because ice under snow piles or under unshoveled snow is insulated and does not thicken as fast as exposed ice.

Today's poem, "Robert's Pond", written in my father's voice, tells the story of one such occasion when my father spent an entire day working side by side with his grandfather, George Fontaine, Sr. (who would help with the business now and then), clearing the pond of snow every four feet in four-foot paths. Dad had great respect for his grandfather and described him as an exceptionally quiet man. When he told me the story of this particular work day, he said they didn't say a word just enjoyed working quietly side-by-side. I also remember Dad telling of his last New Year's Day visit to his grandfather's house before George Sr. died in March, 1963 and how as he approached George Sr. to shake his hand, his grandfather greeted him with these words: "Mon bieux ami." (My old friend.)

The poem "Ice Damage", tells the story of a day when my dad's ice truck needed refilling so he went to the ice house where the men were loading the last of that winter's blocks from the pond onto the conveyer belt. He asked them to stop the process so he could reconfigure the belt so blocks could come onto his truck out the back side of the ice house. This loading area was out of view from the pond and out of view of the man inside who was sending the blocks out to him at the truck. So when my father's leg fell through a rotted piece of the conveyer belt wood, no one knew NOT to send the next ice block out of the building. Fortunately for him, he had his back to the ice block about to hit, with seconds to brace himself for the major whack to his back.

P.S. Some years, when the winter was too mild, R.J. had to buy ice from other sources. Here is a related letter from the C.B. Kendall Ice Co. Also posted, on the next page, are photos of R.J.'s ice pick and sheath, fuel and repair slips from the mid-30's, and a collage of cards that were used by Fontaine ice customers. The large square card would be placed by the customer in a window visible to the street, with the ice weight request for that delivery positioned at the top of the card. Dad and pépé's knew how much ice each customer wanted with a quick glance at the window.

Rite of Passage, Robert's Pond

As the sun began its rise
the hum of Pa's Ford
faded off our backs.

We plowed our wool pants
through deep untouched snow
leaving lunches at the icehouse
with hot black tea
then began an ice-making dance
my grandfather and me.

We shoveled that pond
side by side
a path every four feet
four feet wide
quiet
but for snow clearing sounds
two backs bending up and down
bend scrape swoosh thud
again and again and again
and just as I was sure
my arms would move no more
we were beckoned
by the Ford's engine roar
to quit.

Retiring shovels to our shoulders
we retraced our morning tracks
stopping only for the cold thermos
and our two empty paper sacks.

I glanced back
bidding the ice goodnight
as the moon began its rise.

HERBERT L. KENDALL, President. HARRY S. KENDALL, Treasurer.

C. B. KENDALL CO.
ICE AND FUEL
GARDNER, MASS.

CAR-LOAD
ICE SHIPMENTS
ANYWHERE-ANYTIME

Aug. 27, 1937.

"NOT JUST ICE
BUT SERVICE"
Phone 1500

Mr. R. J. F. ,
Three Rivers, Mass.

time ago you inquired of us in regard to ice.
and practically nothing to sell.

we have purchased some ice in north
llent quality, 14" to 16" thick,
eased to supply you. This ice is ve
e to high freight rate and I f
afford to pay. However, if y
supply you this on the following basis:

Cost f.o.b. Ice house
Freight to Three Rivers, Mass.

C. B. KENDALL CO.

Buying ice from C.B. Kendall 1937

Ice Damage

10:57 am

I park alongside the icehouse
hear the rickety-spit song of a
1929 motor, encased in its original
Chevy frame, now born-again breath
to a 50 foot conveyor. It's 22 degrees
and I've been peddling ice since dawn.

10:58 am

I open the tailgate, throw back
the canvas top, walk toward a
section of run mid-way between
icehouse and pond. Five men
are working today: three inside
stack 200 pound blocks of ice
while two men stand on water
pushing cakes cut yesterday
onto wood-channeled planks.

11:00 am

Their pike poles pause as I
re-configure the run lifting two
heavy boards in place, steering
the next six cakes my way.
Inside the icehouse the men
will have to wait.

11:03 am

Back to load my truck I climb
onto the foot of the run —
spearing sliding guiding
the first big chunk — *chunk* —
into the empty bed. Stepping
back my right leg falls through
rotted wood. They can't see
me from the pond. They can't
hear me inside. A second cake
approaches — I can hear it slide.
I square my shoulders
brace my back

11:0



Ice truck fuel and repair slips from 1934 and 1935



R.J.'s ice pick and belt sheath



Ice customer ordering card and billing cards

April 27, 2018

Dear Family,

In writing a poem, the poet is mindful of three main elements: mode (narrative, lyric, or meditative), form (free verse, strict form verse, stanzas, block, etc.) and device (craft such as rhyme, rhythm and repetition).

Today's poem, "Obituary", is a 'prose poem'. This form can be tricky, but for this particular story - the story of the death of the ice man - it seemed most appropriate.

With the invention of the refrigerator, came the demise of R.J.'s ice business, so by the late 40's he was already transitioning into a couple of new ventures, one of which was the oil delivery business. Many homes in the area had moved from wood or coal heat to fuel oil heat and R.J. ventured into serving those needs. But, as fate would have it, he quickly discovered that the fumes from the fuel oil made him sick, so he sold the oil business to his brother-in-law, Alphonse Jr., (Beatrice's brother), and Dulude Oil was born. Dulude Oil blossomed under Alphonse's reign and when he died suddenly in 1965, his daughter Rita and her husband Leroy Rogers ran the business until they sold it in 1981 to Noonan Energy, another local oil company.

R.J.'s other enterprise was long distance hauling whereby he employed several men including my father Richard, Pete (Wilfred) Dulude, John Myers, and Dizzy Brodeur to transport goods for Better Brush to New York, Ohio, and Illinois. I can't tell you the precise dates of when this long distance hauling started, but I can tell you that my parents spent their first married Christmas in 1950 on one of those long haul trips, and when my mother told her version of the story it included something about having to pee in a cup!

About that same time my father and his dad expanded their long distance moving to include local services, and that was the beginning of Fontaine Moving and Storage.

Obituary

When he said, that icebox has served us well for thirty-four years, give me one good reason why we should get rid of it, I said, because every single family in this neighborhood including the Gondek's and the Walulaks's has a Frigidaire and I heard Lou Gervais telling Millie Gulonka that Fontaine Ice is closing and that will mean buying from LaBonte and paying extra for delivery and who knows how much longer they'll be in business. That's when he sighed that long, silent sigh where he tosses a hard glance over his left side, and said, on Saturday, I'll stop by the Montgomery Ward, and then I said, I already did.



R.J. by his moving van next to his garage early 1940's. His brother Maurice, built the storage compartment over a flat bed truck. Exterior metal.

April 28, 2018

Dear Family,

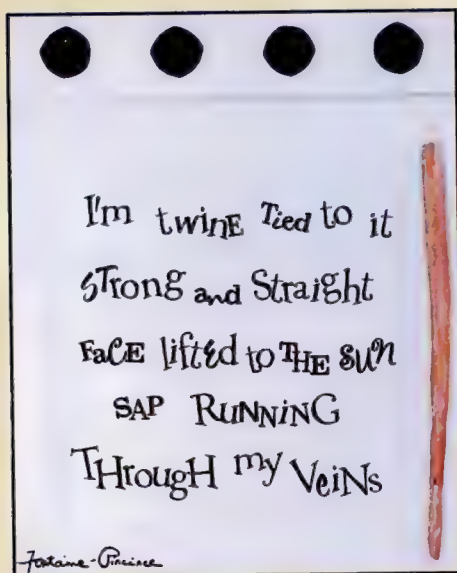
R.J. Fontaine was grateful for the opportunities provided here in the United States, but whenever he spoke of his Canadian roots there was a longing in his voice. As he grew older he mentioned on more than one occasion that he wished he could go back "just one more time". His love of animals and of farm life was obvious, but it was equally apparent to me that his comfort in being in the woods was equally as great. I learned that his father, George Sr., had earned his living cutting trees as did many members of his extended family, and two of George's uncles had headed for the woods and were never heard from again.

Sometime in the mid-60's my father planned an Adirondack backpacking trip for himself and his dad, and I learned later that when they made camp their first night on the trail, R.J. proceeded to create all the comforts of home: a tree slab for a table, seats from fallen trees, and the next morning he even whittled a twig into a spatula to stir their scrambled eggs. For years Dad stored that handmade spatula with his backpacking equipment, and when his bad lungs finally forced him to quit hiking and he passed his equipment on to me, I found the whittled stick in the bottom of the box and I've kept it all these years.

Pépè's stories were always interesting, but my favorite was when he spoke of his paternal grandmother, Julie Gauthier, who married his grandfather (George's father), Raymond in 1862. According to R.J., his grandmother Julie was 'Indian'. He never once used the term 'Native American', and he always described her as 'big boned, dark skinned, and homely as hell'. He said she would go behind their barn every night to smoke a clay pipe. Another interesting fact was that Julie had two sisters who married two of Raymond's brothers. Apparently three Fontaine brothers went to visit the old man Gauthier and asked permission to marry his daughters, and the old man said 'yes'.

That one backpacking trip with his son wasn't R.J.'s only mode of recreation. Each year in March, on a Sunday afternoon, he and Beatrice would take their beige Oldsmobile (the good car), pick up their friends Mr. and Mrs. Demers, and the four of them would head north to eat 'sugar on snow' - a fresh maple syrup delight enjoyed by many in these parts. And, usually once each year on a Sunday afternoon in July, we would see R.J. (from our window across the street) relaxing for an hour or two on his heavy duty lounge chair, cooled by the shade of his big, blue spruce tree.

Two poems today preserve those memories.



I'm twine Tied to it
Strong and Straight
Face lifted to THE SUN
SAP RUNNING
THROUGH my VeINS

Julaine-Pineau

Vacation Sunday, 1950's

The old sandals, like new, were brown leather
ribbed tank T-shirt, and socks, clean white
the pants he wore - now just a blur
this garb, out of character, not right.

After church and the noon day meal
the chaise lounge he'd roll from the shed
a tri-fold of metal on wheels
unfolded, red-padded, now a bed.

Fifty feet of blue spruce cast a shadow
sliced cool across the lawn where he'd lie
orange soda, from a bottle, sipped slow -
July sun burning fire in the sky.

Pepere's message to all was clear:
summer vacation, at last, was here.

The Stick

His father was a lumberjack whose uncles headed
for the woods never to be heard from again.
He healed a young maple planted by my dad. I spied
him from the crack in our fern print drapes mashing
the medicine, massaging in poultice with glorious goo
blackened hands, pausing tenderly on bended knee
before wrapping burlap around the thirsty trunk.

I first saw the stick as it fell from my father's pack,
a feather in his forty pounds of cookware, raingear,
food scraps and such after a weekend jaunt
with his dad, through the woods. It was nothing more
than a debarked branch, whittled by my grandfather
into a primitive cook tool: a long rounded handle
with the other end slightly curved before going flat.

I didn't see the stick again for more than thirty years
until the day my dad's gear was left abandoned
on my porch; a bittersweet gift from a man whose lungs
were finally forced off the trails. Christmas came early
that day in July. There was a two-man tent and a winter
bag with loft so high (*They don't make 'em like this
anymore*) whiskey flask, candle lantern and a titanium
cook rack with its own canvas sack (weighing no more,
I swear, than an ounce) and hidden underneath it all -
the stick he'd kept all those years.

Now on the edge of my white washer, it rests.
One world meets the next. Spatula transformed to whisk,
perpetually powered by my hand dissolving detergent
load after load after load. To you it is a whittled nothing.
A mere twig. One that you might toss to the edge
of the road - or worse - burn on a springtime Saturday.
To me it is my inheritance: the golden stake in this garden.
I'm twine tied to it - strong and straight,
face lifted to the sun, sap running through my veins.

April 29, 2018

Dear Family,

In the 1940's, 50's, and 60's, downtown Three Rivers was booming. Locals could buy groceries at Tenczar's Market (the original market); buy clothing at Wojek's and at Walulak's (where they could also buy sporting goods); furniture at Potvin's (later Topor's); building materials at Belanger's; home appliances at Chudy's; prescriptions and various sundries at Keith & Horgan Drug Store; get a haircut at the barber shop or Fran's Beauty Salon; grab a bite to eat at Dominic's or Charlie's; enjoy a beer at St. Stan's Club, or Lis' Cafe.

As a young girl I enjoyed the freedom to walk downtown to buy Christmas gifts for my parents and grandparents, and I remember each December purchasing nylons for my grandmother at Wojek's Clothing Store. For pépè's gift, I would head in the opposite direction to the other end of Main Street to Four Corners' Gas Station (across from the Polish Church) where I would buy him a corncob pipe and a package of Mayo's tobacco - his smoke of choice with an aroma so sweet, I can still smell it!

Years ago when I wrote today's poem, I wrestled with the fact that I had on a certain level contributed to pepe's lung disease, but when I was young and immortal my gift of pipes and tobacco were pure acts of love.

When he was 76, my grandfather R.J. Fontaine, suffered a slow 'emphysema' death before passing away on March 2, 1981. "And So I Don't", marks the advice he gave me a few days before he died.

And So I Don't

It wasn't delivered like a sermon
it was advice
a hospital bed whisper
fourteen days and counting
to a death that grew from seeds
spread in his early teens
sent so young to work the mines
asbestos spiders spinning webs of rot
across the lining of his lungs

I warmed and watered that rot
walking the annual December mile
to Four Corner's Gas Station
"On The Hill But On The Level"
buying him a new corncob pipe
and a small pouch of Mayo's tobacco
paying homage to his lifelong vice
the only time he'd stop and sit
I liked the smell and besides
it was a pact between us
this ritual Christmas gift

In burdened breath
with his unspoken list of regrets
laid open like his johnny
he offered these final words
Don't wait he said
Don't

April 30, 2018

Dear Family,

This is the last day and the last chapter in this month-long family storytelling endeavor. Today's poem and companion artwork are about my grandfather (my *pépère*), R.J. Fontaine. On day one I didn't set out with an outline or a particular plan; just jumped into this project and allowed the process to unfold as it would. It seems most fitting that this circle begins and ends with stories about *pépère*. In my opinion, R.J. embodied the qualities of what I consider a successful man: he worked hard and played hard; he was humorous and laughed often; he loved animals and young children; he respected the earth; and he was inventive, resourceful, generous, spiritual, humble, patient, and kind.

There are more poems, more photographs, and more stories to share about our ancestors and especially about *pepe* like how each year when he and *mémère* came to our house for Thanksgiving dinner, and my mother made pecan pie (his favorite) for desert, he would announce to all of us that we shouldn't eat the pie, "The nuts are bad for your teeth"!

By now you should be wondering about the other family stories; the ones about failure, disappointment, and shame. Our family has those stories too, but you won't hear them from me.

You might also be wondering why I, as the family storyteller with an older brother and a younger sister, wrote each letter as 'I', instead of 'WE'. I'll tell you why: each of us has our own perspective, our own interpretation, and our own relationship with the same people, places, and events. My memories are not Bernie's or Michelle's, and their memories are not mine. Everything I've shared with you this month is based on my truth; as assimilated through my senses growing up in our Franco-American family, where through 'my people' their lives and their stories I was provided inspiration and fuel for my imagination.

By the way, when I was writing the letter about dancing quadrilles at St. Stan's Club in 1950 (#18), I called St. Stan's and asked the bartender on duty if they still rent the upstairs hall for events, and he said 'No, it's condemned'.

Love,
Mom
Mémère
Aunt Denise
Denise

The Way I Like Them

The day he was laid out
my grandfather's fingernails
were clean. His black suit
and stiff white shirt, with the no
button collar and the shy gray tie,
were the same ones he'd worn
to St. Ann's every Sunday, worn
to all our family weddings
and funerals. The hair was right,
so little of it left: straight, coarse,
slicked back – still black,
but the fingernails were wrong.

Wrong for a man whose hobby
was to raise Black Angus cows,
repair fence posts, grease his
Massey-Ferguson engine. Wrong
for a man who changed tires on
hundreds of trucks while hauling
ice, then later hauling households.
Wrong for a man whose wife used
Lestoil on a washboard with a scrub
brush in the basement, erasing sweat
stains from his Sears work shirts.

Leave his hands alone I wish I'd said.
Keep his nails dirty.



The Way I Like Them

